



New Brunswick's Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability

Progress Report May 30, 2017

2012-18



New Brunswick
Nouveau Brunswick

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Employment Action Plan
for Persons with a Disability
2012-2018**

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May 30, 2017**

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Background

In 2012, stakeholders and government departments released *Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012-2017*, work built on several similar plans during the previous 25 years.

This Employment Action Plan (EAP) includes 38 recommendations to respond to issues identified during this consultation and engagement process.

Originally with a five-year implementation period, the EAP recently was extended by one year. Implementation is now expected to conclude on March 31, 2018.

The following provincial government departments have been involved in leading the implementation of the EAP:

- Social Development;
- Treasury Board;
- Education and Early Childhood Development;
- Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour;
- Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat; and
- Health.

The **Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons** has also been involved in development and implementation of the EAP.

The EAP is ambitious, requiring a high level of collaboration among a diverse group of stakeholders to improve disability policies, programs and services in New Brunswick.

The EAP is intended to improve literacy, training, education and employment supports for persons with a disability.

Many of the 38 recommendations are inter-connected and touch on the following themes:

- preparing youth with a disability for employment;
- accessing post-secondary education and training;
- providing pre-employment supports;
- removing barriers to employment;
- strengthening community supports;
- encouraging employers;
- facilitating self-employment; and
- enhancing public awareness.

In 2015, the council assumed the coordinating role for the EAP.

The council was created by the provincial government and is responsible for stakeholder consultation and engagement, research and study, and information sharing on issues related the status of persons with disabilities in this province.

The council advises the provincial government on disability issues and policies. It also encourages and monitors government compliance with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

The council's partnerships with government and the not-for-profit sector are key factors as stakeholders work together to improve the supports and outcomes for persons with disabilities, and their families.

Structure

The council consists of a chairperson and 12 members appointed by the Lieutenant- Governor in Council.

Mandate

Under the *Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons Act*, the council shall:

- Advise the Minister on matters relating to the status of persons with a disability;
- Bring before the government and the public matters of interest and concern to persons with a disability;
- Promote the prevention of disabling conditions;
- Promote employment opportunities of persons with a disability; and
- Promote access by persons with a disability to all services offered to the citizens of New Brunswick.

In addition, the council may:

- Receive and hear requests and suggestions from individuals and groups concerning the status of persons with a disability;
- Undertake research on matters relevant to the status of persons with a disability and recommend research areas that can be studied by governments, voluntary associations, private business and universities;
- Recommend programs concerning the status of persons with a disability;
- Make referrals to, and consult and collaborate with, government agencies; voluntary associations, private business, universities and individuals on matters which affect the status of persons with a disability;
- Appoint committees consisting of members and other persons who are not members of the council;
- Propose legislation, policies and practices to improve the status of persons with a disability; and
- Publish the reports, studies and recommendations that the council considers necessary.

The council also produces a number of information directories, including:

- **Directory of Services** Offered to Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick;
- **Transportation Directory** for Persons with Disabilities and Seniors in New Brunswick;
- **Career Counselling**, Job Placement Services and Training Opportunities.
- **Financial Aid** for Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick;
- **Sources for funding** assistance for rehabilitation equipment, barrier free access, income assistance, medical expenses, housing, funding for community and non-profit organizations and recreation.

This is the fourth annual progress report on the implementation of the EAP. It has 65 recommended actions as well as additional actionable items. All 65 are in various stages of progress or have been completed.

It is worth noting that implementation of the EAP has recently been included as a key pillar in the *New Brunswick Family Plan – Improving Access to Primary and Acute Care*, which was launched by the Government of New Brunswick in January 2017.

Many community stakeholders have been active in developing and implementing the EAP and continue to work with GNB departments to encourage and guide its full implementation.

Abbreviations

Government of New Brunswick departments and agencies

- CCNB: Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick
- ECO: Executive Council Office
- EECD: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- EEO: Equal Employment Opportunity Program
- ESIC: Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
- GNB: Government of New Brunswick
- NBCC: New Brunswick Community College
- PCSDP: Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons
- PETL: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
- PO: Office of the Premier
- SD: Department of Social Development
- SNB: Service New Brunswick
- TB: Treasury Board

Other

- ADAPT: Adult Development Activities, Programs and Training
- CAMET: Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training
- CPS: Career Planning Services
- EAP: Employment Action Plan
- EAS: Employment Assistance Service Agency
- NBDEN: New Brunswick Disability Executives Network
- NBESS: New Brunswick Employer Support Service
- NBON: New Brunswick Opportunities Network
- PES: Pre-Employability Services
- TESS: Training and Employment Support Services
- WS: Work Services

Summary: Status of recommendations

Completed, 45	In progress, 20	Not started, 0
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#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
1	GNB adopt and implement a government-wide “Employment First” policy.	TB and PCSDP	Completed
2	GNB appoint a point of responsibility within GNB for overseeing development, implementation and coordination of all employment oriented policies for persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
3	GNB, in consultation with key stakeholders, develop, adopt and begin to implement a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability.	EECD	In progress
4	Develop and implement formal partnerships with community organizations that support persons with a disability to achieve transition and employment goals.	EECD	In progress
5	Review and make necessary changes to experiential workplace programs.	EECD	In progress
6	Develop and provide high school students with a disability, who have completed grade 11, with structured summer “intern” work opportunities.	EECD	In progress
7	GNB commit to increasing participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education by:		
7.a	Establishing benchmark data on the number of students with a disability currently attending post-secondary institutions and establishing targets for increasing participation rates over the next 5 years.	PETL	Completed
7.b	Establishing a consultation process to develop clear guidelines for requirement of a psycho-educational assessment.	EECD	In progress
7.c	Establish consistent guidelines for providing complete and consistent documentation required for students to apply for entrance into post-secondary institutions.	EECD	Completed
7.d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of students admitted to NBCC/CCNB through special admissions processes so that a minimum of 40 students are participating in NBCC and CCNB programs by 2015. 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that special admissions are available to all students with a disability who have had a modified high school program and who cannot apply through the regular admissions process. 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing access to NBCC and CCNB programs for working age adults with a disability who are out of high school. 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of seats per program 	PETL	Completed
7.d	Ensuring adequate navigational supports for youth with a disability who apply to NBCC/CCNB to have success in their college program.	PETL	Completed

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
7.e	Modify the TESS program to allow for 'bridge funding" for disabled students awaiting student loan approvals; and an increase in the amount of extra time afforded disabled students to complete their programs, from 30% to 50%.	PETL	Completed
7.f	Improve the Canada Study Grant approval process by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a 10 working day standard for approving applications for student financial aid. 	PETL	Completed
7.f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should CSG funding be approved but not be in place at the beginning of the academic year/term, providing provisional support funding through post-secondary institutions subject to repayment once the CSG funding is received. 	PETL	Completed
7.g	Developing and implementing an education/professional development program aimed at post-secondary education administrators on the requirements to provide reasonable accommodations, Universal design, for Learning strategies and inclusive practices.	PETL	Completed
8	For students with a disability attending post-secondary education review existing supports, research models of support in other jurisdictions, identify current gaps in support in NB and establish a plan for addressing any support gaps.	EECD	In progress
9	GNB, in partnership with private, public sector, and community stakeholders, design, develop and implement a structured Intern Program for persons with a disability	PETL	In progress
10	An ad hoc government/community working group be established to review existing pre-employment services and recommend one or more Department(s) to take the lead for "pre-employment services" for persons with a disability.	PETL	In progress
11	GNB adopt a person-centered pre-employment model for persons with a disability.	SD	In progress
12	A multi-faceted program of awareness and promotion be developed to inform persons with a disability of employment supports available and how to access them.	PCSDP	Completed
13	GNB ensure that new social assistance policies and programs for persons with a disability actively support the belief that people are employable and:		
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for wage exemptions that will encourage people to work and retain more income from employment closer to recognized poverty levels; 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow persons with a disability to retain access to health related benefits if they are employed and leave social assistance. 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that people's needs for pre-employment supports (including transportation) are addressed through active employment planning and integration of pre-employment support programs and funding; 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training for GNB employees to better understand the goals, policies, benefits, and communication strategy for effectively accessing community service providers; 	SD	Completed

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for a new approach for addressing the needs of youth with a disability who are still in high school; 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new service delivery model for proactive pre-employment and employment planning. 	SD	Completed
14	Establish a joint government/community working group to develop a strategy to ensure that accessible and affordable transportation is available throughout NB.	ESIC	Completed
15	Prior to a new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for persons with a disability, hold consultations with stakeholders to develop an appropriate employment service delivery and funding model for persons with a disability.	PETL	Completed
16	Review current Employment Assistance Services for Persons with a disability with a focus on underserved populations and geographic disparities.	PETL	Completed
17	As part of the new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for persons with a disability, initiate a longer term (minimum three-year) contracting process.	PETL	Completed
18	Develop and implement access to professional development opportunities for staff that provides services under EAS contracts.	PETL	Completed
19	Improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports by:		
19.a	Developing and implementing a provincial Job Coach/Mentor Training Program.	PETL	In progress
19.b	With NBCC and CCNB modify curriculum within human services programs to ensure the inclusion of a learning module(s) on job coaching/mentoring strategies.	PETL	In progress
19.c	Establishing a salary standard range for Job Coaches who have successfully completed a training program in job coaching.	PETL	In progress
20	Establish an active formal network of employment agencies serving persons with a disability.	PETL	Completed
21	In consultation with stakeholders, undertake a comprehensive review of the Adult Development Activities, Programs and Training (ADAPT) program.	SD	Completed
22	Review and reform the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) Program and guidelines.	PETL	Completed
23	Revise the Disability Support Program so that adults under age 65 with more significant disabilities who require longer term disability-related supports for training and employment can receive funding after they have exhausted TESS funding.	SD	Completed
24	Recruit, mentor and retain an additional six qualified interpreters so that the number of available qualified interpreters increases from six to twelve within three years.	PETL	In progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
25	Adopt a ten-day approval standard for equipment and technical aid applications under the Health Services Program.	SD	Completed
26	GNB take measures to increase the number and percentage of persons with a disability in the provincial public service by:		
26.a	Developing and enacting provincial employment equity legislation;	TB	Completed
26.b	Establishing a provincial public service diversity and inclusion policy and recruitment strategy to increase the representation of persons with a disability; and	TB	Completed
26.c	Reforming the Equal Employment Opportunities Program to provide more participation of persons with a disability in the public service.	TB	In progress
27	Review and revise the New Brunswick Opportunities Network (NBON) tendering process for bidders on provincial contracts to demonstrate how persons with a disability are included in their workforce and measures they will take to hire persons with a disability if they are successful in their bid.	SNB	Completed
28	Conduct a review of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service and develop a renewal plan.	PETL	Completed
29	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by:		
29.a	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by Developing and implementing a provincial tax credit (similar to the U.S. Work Opportunity Tax Credit);	PETL	In progress
29.b	Providing wage subsidies and supports for employers that participate in the proposed Intern Program for Persons with a disability;	PETL	In progress
29.c	Providing 'rebate grants' to employers that hire persons with a disability to cover the cost of Mandatory Employment Related Costs; and	PETL	In progress
29.d	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by developing a communication strategy to build awareness amongst employers of incentives and a simplified application process.	PETL	In progress
30	Establish a self-employment initiative for persons with a disability that will include:		
30.a	A short-term research project on current best practices for supporting self-employment for persons with a disability.	PETL	Completed
30.b	A review of how the current network of enterprise agencies can support persons with a disability and their self-employment options.	PETL	Completed
30.c	An investigation of the provision of financial support to persons with a disability interested in self-employment, including the use of current programs (e.g., Workforce Expansion).	PETL	Completed
30.d	A review of current Social Assistance policies so they can be improved to support persons with a disability who want to undertake self-employment opportunities.	PETL	In progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
31	Develop and implement a new communications plan to improve the visibility of the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons as a central resource for people seeking assistance with employment goals.	PCSDP	In progress
32	Hold a Premier's Forum every two years on employment for persons with a disability to: better engage employers; generate interest in hiring; and promote awareness and interest in the Employment Action Plan.	PSCDP	Completed
33	Hold an annual provincial conference on employment for persons with a disability to share knowledge and best practices.	PETL	Completed
34.a	Hold discussions between stakeholders on research into policy and best practices for employment of persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
34.b	Establish a research agenda into policy and best practices for employment for persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
35	Establish baseline data for all recommendations to allow for measurement of progress.	PCSDP	Completed
36	An Employment Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group be established to oversee the Action Plan.	PCSDP	Completed
37	An annual report on the implementation of the Employment Action Plan prepared and released publicly during Disability Awareness Week.	PCSDP	Completed
38	An annual meeting between community partners, Ministers, key deputy ministers and the Premier is held to discuss progress, issues and challenges.	PO	Completed

Detailed information on implementation

Recommendation 1

The Government of New Brunswick adopts and implements a government-wide “Employment First” policy that:

- Reflects that every working aged New Brunswicker with a disability is presumed to be employable;
- Provides that the first objective of government policies and programs will be to support persons with a disability to work to their fullest potential;
- Acknowledges that persons with a disability have opportunities to plan careers and enjoy employment opportunities beyond entry level types of occupations; and
- Acknowledges that persons with a disability may still need access to disability-related supports for goals and activities that fall outside of employment.

Completed

GNB has adopted improved employment for persons with a disability as a key outcome indicator within the GNB Family Plan and the Family Priority Delivery Unit. In addition, the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program, which is being revitalized, is the key access point to implement improved hiring for persons with a disability in GNB.

Recommendation 2

The Government of New Brunswick appoints a key point of responsibility within government for overseeing the development, implementation and coordination of all employment-oriented policies for persons with a disability.

Completed

Recommendation 3

The Government of New Brunswick, in consultation with other governments, private sector and community partners, develop, adopt and begin implementation of a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability, with a particular focus on assisting youth make a successful transition from school to employment or post-secondary education or training. This policy must address:

- Standards of practice for New Brunswick schools and school districts, such as standards of practice relating to transition planning that should start no later than grade 8;
- The need for transition programs and practices to be guided by an ‘Employment First’ approach;
- The roles of Guidance programs in supporting students with a disability and requirements for ratios of guidance counselors to students using ratios supported by current best practice research (research suggests an optimal ratio of 1:350);
- The roles of schools and school districts in supporting students with a disability to apply for and access post-secondary education and training;
- Follow up surveys with students with a disability two years after leaving high school to determine their participation in post-secondary education or training and employment; and
- A clear description of the partnership between government departments and community organizations and the respective roles and responsibilities.

In progress

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will complete this recommendation by implementing the 10-year education plan, most likely after the current EAP concludes in March 2018.

Recommendation 4

Develop and implement formal partnerships (including funding partnerships) with community organizations that have experience with supporting persons with a disability to achieve transition and employment goals. Such partnerships may be designed to provide assistance with career exploration, transition to work planning and work preparation strategies.

In progress

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will complete this recommendation by implementing the 10-year education plan, most likely after the current EAP concludes in March 2018. The department is working with stakeholders to better understand school needs regarding career exploration, transition-to-work planning and work preparation strategies. The department is collecting data, which will lead next actions.

Recommendation 5

Review and make necessary changes to experiential workplace programs (such as Co-Operative Education in the Anglophone sector or Education cooperative in the Francophone sector) to ensure that:

- All students with a disability have access to community workplace learning opportunities in regular workplaces (and baseline data and rates of participation in these opportunities are determined and kept);
- Community workplace learning opportunities match student strengths and career/employment goals;
- Appropriate workplace supports and accommodations are provided;
- Job coaching and mentoring support is provided by people who have been trained in providing this support;
- Transportation needs to community workplaces are addressed; and
- Specific learning and skill development goals are developed and employers are engaged as partners in the evaluation of experiential workplace learning.

In progress

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will complete this recommendation by implementing the 10-year education plan, most likely after the current EAP concludes in March 2018. The Policy and Planning Division of the department is working with the two educational services divisions on renewing this policy.

Recommendation 6

Develop and provide high school students with a disability, who have completed grade 11, with structured summer “intern” work opportunities (see Recommendation 9 for further details).

In progress

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will complete this recommendation by implementing the 10-year education plan, most likely after the current EAP concludes in March 2018. Stakeholders will be involved to put this initiative into operation.

Recommendation 7

The Government of New Brunswick commit to increasing participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education by undertaking the following measures:

- a) Establishing benchmark data on the number of students with a disability currently attending post-secondary institutions and then establishing targets for increasing participation rates over the next 5 years.

Completed

- b) Establishing a consultation process to develop clear guidelines for requirement of a psycho-educational assessment (e.g., who requires one, who is responsible for coordination and payment).

In progress

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will complete this recommendation by implementing the 10-year education plan, most likely after the current EAP concludes in March 2018.

- c) Following a review of the current process for New Brunswick school districts, establish consistent guidelines for providing complete documentation required for students to apply for entrance into post-secondary institutions. This should include psycho-educational assessments for students with a learning disability and documentation of accommodations that a student received during high school and establishing consistent guidelines for documentation. This requirement should be included in the proposed policy on transition for students with a disability (see Recommendation 3).

Completed

- d) Working with NBCC and CCNB to review and expand special admissions processes for students who do not meet the regular entrance criteria. This expansion should be aimed at:
 - *Increasing the number of students admitted to NBCC/CCNB through special admissions processes so that a minimum of 40 students are participating in NBCC and CCNB programs by 2015 (currently admissions are between 25 and 30 per year).*

Completed

- Ensuring that special admissions are available to all students with disability who have had a modified high school program and who cannot apply through the regular admissions process.
- Providing access to NBCC and CCNB programs for working age adults with a disability who are out of high school.

Completed

- Increasing the number of seats per program;

Completed

- Ensuring that adequate navigational and planning supports are in place to assist youth with a disability to apply to NBCC and CCNB and to have success within their chosen college program.

Completed

- e) Modifying the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) program guidelines to allow for:
 - *'Bridge funding' for students who enter post-secondary education on a modified program but who later transfer to a regular education program. Funding should be maintained until applications for student loans and grants have been completed and approved; and*

- An increase in the additional time allowed to complete a program from the current 30% to 50% to better support students who have been accommodated through a reduced course load or extended program length.

Completed

- f) Improving the Canada Study Grant approval process as follows:
- Establishing a 10 working day standard for approving applications for student financial aid so that needed supports are in place for students with a disability at the beginning of the post-secondary program; and

Completed

- Should CSG funding be approved but not be in place at the beginning of the academic year/ term, providing provisional support funding through post-secondary institutions subject to repayment once the CSG funding is received.

Completed

Post-secondary educational institutions provide support services for students with disabilities while the Canada Study Grant approvals are being processed. Note-taking and tutors are available, and some universities offer accessibility centres equipped with adapted technologies. Post-secondary educational institutions do not advance grant funding to students waiting for a Canada Student Grant application to be processed.

- a) Developing and implementing an education/professional development program aimed at post-secondary education administrators and instructors on the requirements to provide reasonable accommodations, Universal Design for Learning strategies and inclusive practices.

Completed

Recommendation 8

Review the current support provided to students with a disability attending post-secondary education to engage in and complete career exploration and decision making activities. Through the review, conduct research on models of support in other jurisdictions, identify any current gaps in support in New Brunswick and establish a plan for addressing these gaps.

In progress

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has begun this review of these current supports along with the jurisdictional scan on existing models of support elsewhere. The gap analysis is also underway. Establishing a plan to address these gaps, along with implementing this plan, is expected to be completed by March 2018. In response to this recommendation, the department is looking at the transition needs of all students, including those with disabilities, through the Response to Intervention approach. The department is implementing the career development framework of the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET), Future in Focus.

This five-year plan has the following goals:

- Support for career development using a coordinated whole school approach, organized by career development themes;
- Implementing age-appropriate career development programs, services or support;
- Promoting career development as an integral part of student learning;
- Ensuring that each student graduates with a personal career plan;
- Providing multiple opportunities for students to engage in community-based/experiential workplace learning;
- Providing professional learning for educators to ensure effective and engaging career development opportunities for students; and

- *Ensuring access to timely, reliable, and relevant career and labour market information (including information on how to access disability stakeholder groups and services).*

Although the lead department for this recommendation has changed, the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will continue collaborating with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on this issue.

Recommendation 9

The Government of New Brunswick, in partnership with private and public sector employers and community stakeholders, design, develop and implement a structured Intern Program for persons with a disability that would have the following features:

- The development of a concrete and time limited skill development and learning plan for interns with a disability;
- The use of current Work Ability Program funding to provide a participation salary to interns to allow for a maximum of a 6 month paid internship;
- The involvement of employers in the design and evaluation of the intern's skill development and learning plan;
- The provision of job coach/mentor or other necessary supports and accommodations through the TESS program;
- The provision of a certificate of participation for interns with an accompanying skills profile for interns who complete the program;
- The active promotion of the Intern program to persons with a disability and New Brunswick employers; and
- The provision of support and information to employers to successfully hire an intern.

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour approved a research proposal for an intern program from the Canadian Deafblind Association on behalf of the New Brunswick Disability Executives Network (NBDEN). This project was conducted on a provincial, national and international level. The goal is to research and determine effective intern opportunities and strategies for persons with a disability and to propose a recommended model for implementation in New Brunswick.

The final report has been received. The Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour is reviewing the recommendations and analyzing next steps.

Recommendation 10

An ad hoc government/community working group be established as quickly as possible to:

- a) Conduct a short-term review of existing pre-employment services, identify gaps in services and develop a plan to address the gaps; and
- b) Make a recommendation to the Government of New Brunswick regarding the designation of one or more Department(s) that will take the lead for the development, coordination and funding of the following "pre-employment services" for persons with a disability:
 - *Literacy education and training, including Deaf literacy;*
 - *Social and independent living skills training and support (including skills to address workplace stress, anger management, and empowerment);*
 - *Work preparation learning on employer expectations, interviewing, and proper behaviour within the workplace;*
 - *Mental health and resiliency;*
 - *Discovering and determining personal interests and skills to support job matching;*
 - *Support for volunteer activities;*

- *Computer skills training;*
- *GED training;*
- *First Aid & CPR training;*
- *Career exploration assistance (including job shadowing);*
- *Workplace Essential Skills training such as writing, numeracy, communication skills, and working with others; and*
- *Complementary support (such as attendant support, transportation and childcare).*

In progress

This recommendation involves establishing an ad hoc group to look at a number of actions related to pre-employment as well as identifying existing services and gaps. This recommendation is also linked to the new service delivery model being developed by the Department of Social Development. The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour has not yet established this ad hoc committee and is seeking government direction on how to proceed.

Recommendation 11

The Government of New Brunswick adopts a person-centred pre-employment model that will include a protocol and template for developing an individualized pre-employment plan to guide planning and decision making. The protocol should at the very minimum:

- Establish who can provide planning assistance;
- Require the provision of information about prior learning;
- Require that specific pre-employment services and benefits be identified;
- Require information to demonstrate how pre-employment activities and services will support general or specific employment goals and outcomes;
- Require the establishment of a time-frame for pre-employment services as well as a plan to “exit” pre-employment and move to employment search and employment; and,
- Require that the proposed cost of pre-employment services be identified.

In progress

In 2014-15, the Department of Social Development developed and launched the new Pre-Employability Services (PES) modules: In Motion and Momentum. The goal is to engage clients in a process that is focused on acquiring the skills and attitudes necessary to move forward with case planning and to begin career exploration.

The approach is to provide opportunities for participants to experience success, pride, respect, connection and achievement, and through these experiences to build self-esteem, confidence, a sense of personal control, skills and motivation to build their preferred future. This innovative two-part program has achieved promising results and acclaim since the launch in 2015. More than 600 social assistance clients participated in the program in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

In February 2017, the department met with disability stakeholders to present an update on the recommended actions specifically around the In Motion and Momentum modules and Motivational Interviewing (MI).

All 125 department case managers who facilitate the career development of clients received level 1 MI training. The department will also offer ongoing training for new staff hires. An additional 25 case managers have entered into a mentoring program to obtain advanced skills and be able to facilitate the skill development of their peers. Mentors have received level 2 MI training and will continue to attend bi-monthly skills development sessions. These mentors have started to provide bi-weekly learning sessions for all case managers and one-on-one learning time for each case manager as well.

Mentors in one-half of the province started coaching their peers in the fall of 2016 while the other one-half starts in March or April 2017. More mentors will be recruited and trained in the years to come. The goal is for 80 per cent of staff to be proficient in the use of MI with clients by around the spring of 2020. Progress is formally measured biannually.

In the summer/fall of 2016, an organizational structure was put in place so as to help ensure the success of this initiative. A provincial steering committee, a provincial implementation team and regional implementation teams were launched. This structure helps ensure timely issue resolution, clear two-way communication, quality assurance and goal attainment.

Individuals in the department's caseloads have begun to feel the positive effects of this work and this will increase steadily in the coming months. The Department of Social Development has considerable anecdotal evidence of this already, with case managers reporting client accounts of its service having a different feel, of relationships being more of a partnership, and of feeling more respected. The department will soon begin a process that will more formally measure changes in the client's experience.

The Department of Social Development offered MI training to its program case managers to provide them with advanced skills to improve client readiness for change. MI is a client-centred, compassionate, and strength based approach. MI is aligned with the philosophy that the department used in the creation of the PES modules: self-determination, empowerment and intrinsic motivation. In practice, MI and the modules complement one another. The department is now embarking on an initiative to fully integrate MI techniques, philosophies and culture into its daily work with social assistance clients. Ultimately, MI will help the department engage even more New Brunswickers in education, training and employment.

Recommendation 12

A program of awareness and promotion be developed that will inform persons with a disability of all employment supports that are available and how these can be applied for and accessed. This promotion should be multi-faceted and be provided in a variety of accessible formats.

Completed

Recommendation 13

As part of its social assistance reform initiative, the Government of New Brunswick will ensure that new social assistance policies and programs for persons with a disability reflect and actively support the belief that people are employable and:

- Provide for wage exemptions that will encourage people to work and retain income from employment such that people are able to have incomes that more closely approximate recognized poverty measures;

Completed

- Allow for persons with a disability to retain access to health related benefits even if they are employed and leave social assistance (if they do not have access to employer sponsored health benefits and if their incomes fall below a determined yearly amount);

Completed

- Ensure that people's needs for pre-employment supports (including support for transportation) are addressed through active employment planning and the integration of pre-employment support programs and funding;
- Provide training for government employees to ensure that there is adequate understanding of the goals, policies and benefits of the new program as well as strategies for effectively communicating eligibility for benefits and how people can access community service providers;

- Provide for a new approach for addressing the needs of youth with a disability who are still in high school;
- Develop a new service delivery model for proactive pre-employment and employment planning.

Completed

The Department of Social Development is committed to working with all clients to remove barriers to training and employment. Clients with potential for employment are assisted by a case manager to develop an individualized case plan to address their personal and career development needs. Applicants are assessed and assigned to a caseload based on employability.

In partnership with other departments, the department works to make strategic use of federal funding to provide training and employment supports such as transportation, childcare, health card coverage, special clothing and equipment. These benefits are available to all clients who have been assessed to have potential for employment.

The case manager's role is to inform, guide and support clients in navigating and accessing services they require to address their immediate needs and move along the employability continuum, whether it is toward increased social adaptation, improved literacy level, skills development, education and part-time or full-time employment. This requires the case manager to broker and coordinate multiple services among providers and community partners as part of case planning. These skills are developed through the standard training provided to all new case managers and maintained with mentoring opportunities.

The department redesigned its service delivery model for all clients with the potential for employment to enhance case management services for pre-employment, career and employment planning. Within this new model, clients are assigned to one of the three options outlined below based on where they are situated on the employability continuum. Clients are periodically re-assessed and moved along the continuum according to their progress until they find employment. Each service delivery group has specific assessment tools and training opportunities for case managers to provide person-centred case management services that are in line with the client's needs.

- *Pre-Employability Services (PES): The goal is to help clients build a solid foundation for employability. The PES case manager helps clients identify their strengths and needs as well as foundational components that have been proven barriers to sustained employment. Case managers work in collaboration with the client to develop a plan, which may include: access to health services; support with care for dependents; support with caring for individuals with special needs; support with acquiring a stable living situation; improving conflict resolution skills; building healthy relationships; addressing self-esteem issues; developing healthy hygiene habits; and developing interpersonal skills.*
- *Career Planning Services (CPS): The goal is to help clients confirm their occupational goal and to identify and address their career development needs. CPS case managers offer support with career exploration and confirmation of clients' occupational goal; provide guidance and supports to increase education levels; and to help clients resolve barriers to case planning (supports for learning disabilities, problem solving skills, support systems, etc.).*
- *Work Services (WS): The goal is to help work-ready, case-managed clients to seek, obtain and maintain employment. The goal will be met by assisting and encouraging clients to follow and meet their employment plan by acquiring job search skills and by participating in an active and involved job search leading to full-time permanent employment. WS case managers perform professional assessment, employment counselling and case management work to move clients toward employment and self-sufficiency.*

Recommendation 14

No later than the fall of 2012, establish a joint government/community working group to develop a strategy to ensure that accessible and affordable transportation is available throughout New Brunswick, with a focus on ensuring access to transportation for persons with a disability for the purposes of pre-employment activities, as well as post-secondary education, training and employment. The transportation strategy will address:

- The possible creation and subsidization of accessible transportation services in rural areas of the province;
- Access to funding support for transportation for people to access pre-employment activities, as well as post-secondary education and training opportunities;
- Access to funding support for transportation for people to participate in employment opportunities where public forms of transportation are not available or are not accessible, suitable or affordable for specific persons with a disability.

In progress

The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation is leading this joint government and community working group. The final report from this working group is expected to be completed and presented to the board of directors of the corporation in the spring of 2017. Shortly afterward, GNB will receive the report, which will be used to improve transportation for all New Brunswickers, including those with disabilities.

Recommendation 15

Prior to the implementation of a new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services (EAS) for persons with a disability, hold immediate consultations with community stakeholders to develop an appropriate employment service delivery and funding model for persons with a disability. As part of this proposed consultation, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Ensuring equal access to EAS services for people with all types of disability;
- Ensuring equal access to EAS services within all geographical areas of the province; and
- The corresponding competency of contracting agencies to address a variety of disabilities, varying needs for support, and communication, linguistic and cultural requirements.

Completed

Recommendation 16

Review current Employment Assistance Services for Persons with a disability with a focus on identified underserved populations and geographic disparities with the goal of:

- a) Identifying regions where additional services are required to assist such persons to transition to employment; and
- b) Establishing additional services that may be required.

Completed

Recommendation 17

As part of the new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for serving persons with a disability, initiate a longer term (minimum three-year) contracting process to assist agencies to:

- a) Hire and retain qualified and experienced staff;
- b) Engage in longer term planning; and
- c) Provide consistent quality services for persons with a disability.

Completed

Recommendation 18

To ensure on-going education on achieving successful employment outcomes for working age persons with a disability, develop and implement a mechanism for funding, providing and coordinating access to professional development opportunities for staff that provides services under EAS contracts.

Completed

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour has funded a series of professional development sessions for its service providers under Employment Assistance Service (EAS) contracts. For example, the department has provided support to the New Brunswick Career Development Action Group since 2013 and funded the first EAS Network workshop in 2015 and the first annual EAS conference in 2016.

Recommendation 19

Improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports throughout New Brunswick by:

- a) Initiating a Request for Proposals to develop and implement a provincial Job Coach/Mentor Training Program. The training program should run initially for a minimum of three years, include an evaluation component, and be renewed thereafter based on further identified training needs.
- b) Undertaking discussions with NBCC and CCNB on modifying curriculum within human services programs to ensure the inclusion of a learning module(s) on job coaching/mentoring strategies.

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour approved a research proposal for job coaches led by the Neil Squire Society on behalf of NBDEN. This project was conducted on a provincial, national and international level. The goal is to identify barriers to access needed to support services for persons with disability in the workplace related to Job coach support.

The department has received the final report to establish a provincial job coach program and is reviewing the recommendations and analyzing next steps.

- c) Establishing a salary standard range for Job Coaches who have successfully completed a training program in job coaching.

In progress

While the provision of job coach/mentor supports and salary levels is a sector responsibility, the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will evaluate the possibility of setting a salary range standard for job coaches through TESS and with Employment Assistance Services providers.

Recommendation 20

Establish an active formal network of employment agencies serving persons with a disability to share knowledge and collaborate on training, promotion and addressing barriers faced by persons with a disability.

Completed

Recommendation 21

In consultation with community partners, program participants and their families, undertake a comprehensive review of the Adult Development Activities, Programs and Training (ADAPT) program with the goal of building capacity within program agencies to facilitate community employment outcomes for people being served by the program. The review must include:

- a) An update of program standards and standards of practice consistent with current evidence on best practices for supporting people to make the transition to paid employment in the community;
- b) The development and implementation of a training initiative for agencies and their staff on effective practices and strategies for transition to work planning, employment counselling and job coaching;
- c) A review of the requirements necessary for ADAPT program agencies to develop and submit TESS funding applications for the people they serve, and how these requirements will be addressed and met; and
- d) The development of a demonstration initiative with a small number of willing agencies to test the implementation of identified strategies and supports to assist people obtain paid employment in the community.

Completed

The evaluation of this project has been completed and will be presented to the project steering committee by the end of March 2017. The results are expected to inform the next phase, which will include a redesign of the program in light of the project outcomes.

Recommendation 22

Review and reform the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) Program and guidelines with a particular focus on:

- a) Through a phasing in process, increasing the hours of support available from the current maximum of 600 hours over 52 weeks to a minimum of 1200 hours over 52 weeks within 4 years;
- b) Providing enhanced training for TESS Coordinators on:
 - *The potential of persons with a disability to work and help address current and future labour market needs;*
 - *The types of supports by persons with a disability to successfully move to sustainable long term employment;*
 - *The supports need by persons with a disability to participate in post- secondary education and training, and why the supports are necessary; and*
 - *How to review and interpret documentation, including assessments.*
- c) Providing access to support funding for more than one degree program;
- d) Providing access to support funding when an individual changes jobs and requires support to be successful in the new job;
- e) Providing access to support funding for required continuing education or accreditation maintenance when funding for disability supports is not provided by the employer or if a person's disability requires new or additional supports (e.g., technical aids);
- f) Providing clear criteria and an application process for agencies supporting individuals with TESS applications; and
- g) Establishing a reasonable timeline for approving TESS funding applications (for example, 5 working days).

Completed

Recommendation 23

Review and revise policies and criteria for the Disability Support Program so that adults under age 65 with more significant disabilities who require longer term disability-related supports for training and employment (e.g., an attendant or support worker) can apply for and receive funding for such supports after they have exhausted available TESS funding.

Completed

The policy has been updated to allow the Department of Social Development to continue the funding provided through TESS after the individual has reached the TESS funding limit.

Recommendation 24

Recruit, mentor and retain an additional six qualified interpreters so that the number of available qualified interpreters increases from six to twelve within three years. Additional interpreters must meet the requirements to provide services on behalf of the Departments of Social Development and Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour as well as employers.

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is working with the Saint John Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Inc. and the South-East Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services to develop and implement a mentorship program in New Brunswick for interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing.

The NB Stages NB Mentorship Program will help increase the number of qualified sign language interpreters in the province. NB Stages NB is based on the framework of the American Sign Language – English interpretation.

NB Stages NB is in the last phase of the project and the completion of Phase 4 will lead to the implementation of a fully sustainable interpreter mentorship program by the end of 2018.

Recommendation 25

Adopt a ten-day approval standard for equipment and technical aid applications under the Health Services Program to ensure more timely disability-related supports for persons with a disability to transition to training and employment opportunities.

Completed

Equipment provided through the Health Services Program is offered to meet the client's basic needs and activities of daily living in their home environment. In situations where a person with a disability requires equipment or technical aids to support his or her participation in training or employment-related activities, the person should be referred to TESS.

Recommendation 26

The Government of New Brunswick takes concrete measures to increase the number and percentage of persons with a disability in the provincial public service by:

- a) Developing and enacting provincial employment equity legislation;

Completed

- b) Establishing a provincial public service diversity and inclusion policy and a public service human resource recruitment strategy aimed at increasing the representation of persons with a disability; and

Completed

- a) Reforming the Equal Employment Opportunities Program to provide more effective support for facilitating participation of persons with a disability in the public service.

In progress

Revitalization of the EEO program has been announced by GNB. The three current target groups, including persons with a disability, visible minorities and First Nation peoples, will be maintained in this program. An extensive plan to improve the outcomes for EEO is being implemented, including nearly doubling the previously existing funding. Service New Brunswick and the Treasury Board are working together in this initiative.

Recommendation 27

Review and revise the New Brunswick Opportunities Network (NBON) bidding and tendering process with the goal of implementing requirements for bidders on provincial contracts to demonstrate a) How they currently include persons with a disability in their workforce; and b) What measures they will take to hire persons with a disability if they are a successful bidder.

Completed

Recommendation 28

Conduct a review of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service and develop a renewal plan for the service that will include:

- a) An enhanced communications strategy to highlight the employability of persons with a disability and to recognize 'champion' employers;
- b) Enhanced awareness activities highlighting the services and supports available to employers; and
- c) Assistance to employers for determining and enhancing their capacity to be 'disability confident' employers (research models such as the U.K. Employers' Forum on Disability).

Completed

Recommendation 29

Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by:

- a) Developing and implementing a provincial tax credit (similar to the U.S. Work Opportunity Tax Credit);

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will undertake a jurisdictional review and conduct research to determine the feasibility of developing and implementing a provincial tax credit for private-sector employers to hire persons with a disability. This analysis is expected to be completed in 2017.

- b) Providing wage subsidies and supports for employers that participate in the proposed Intern Program for Persons with a disability (see Recommendation 9);

In progress

The department continues to provide incentives to employers, such as enhanced wage subsidies to hire persons with a disability, and it continues to communicate with employers on an on-going basis about the programs and services available. This recommendation will be also addressed through Recommendation 9 which is looking into the creation of an intern program for persons with a disability.

- c) Providing 'rebate grants' to employers that hire persons with a disability to cover the cost of Mandatory Employment Related Costs; and

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is examining the issue of “mandatory employment related costs” to determine what additional supports can be provided to employers within existing funding structures. This is also part of the work being done to create an intern program under Recommendation 9.

- d) Developing an effective communication strategy to build awareness amongst employers of the incentives and to simplify the application process.

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour regularly reviews the effectiveness of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service (NBESS) in collaboration with stakeholders. Since April 2015, the department has collaborated with NBESS and the EAS Network to develop an effective communication strategy to build awareness of the benefits of hiring persons with a disability among employers.

Recommendation 30

Establish a self-employment development initiative for persons with a disability that will include:

- a) A short-term research project on current Canadian and international best practices for supporting self-employment opportunities for persons with a disability;

Completed

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour through a research consultant has completed this short-term research project on the current best practices for supporting self-employment opportunities for persons with a disability.

- b) A review of ways in which the current network of enterprise agencies can support persons with a disability in developing and implementing self-employment options. This will include requirement for training for Community Economic Development agencies (Enterprise Network) on the unique needs of persons with a disability;

Completed

- c) An investigation on how financial support can be provided to persons with a disability who are interested in self-employment, including the use of current programs such as Workforce Expansion; and

Completed

In addition to the research project noted above, the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour continues to fund the Self-Employment Benefit program, which provides financial support and mentoring to all eligible clients starting businesses, including persons with a disability. Community business development corporations deliver self-employment initiatives on behalf of the department.

- d) A review of current Social Assistance policies and how they may be improved to support persons with a disability who want to explore and undertake self-employment opportunities.

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour received the final review report in March 2017, and it is now reviewing the recommendations and planning next steps to improve the support for persons with a disability who want self-employment opportunities.

Recommendation 31

Develop and implement a new communications plan to improve the visibility of the Premier's Council as a central information and referral resource for people seeking services and assistance with employment goals.

In progress

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons is developing a communications plan to improve the visibility of the organization as a central information and resource centre for persons with a disability as part of its strategic plan. Including a rebranding for the council, this work should be completed and implemented by December 2017.

Recommendation 32

Hold a Premier's Forum on Employment for Persons with a disability with a particular focus on engaging employers in order to generate interest in hiring people and to promote awareness of and interest in the Employment Action Plan. Consideration should be given to holding a follow up forum every two years to review progress and renew interest and motivation for achieving employment outcomes for persons with a disability.

Completed

Recommendation 33

Hold an annual provincial conference on employment for persons with a disability to share knowledge and best practices. The conference could be held in conjunction with another key event (e.g., enterprise support network event, Disability Awareness Week). The conference should be a learning opportunity for people who work within the education, training and employment sector who also support employment goals for persons with a disability. It should also have some capacity to bring in experts from the field from outside of New Brunswick.

Completed

Recommendation 34

a) Hold discussions between university representatives, government representatives and community stakeholders on creating interest and capacity with the New Brunswick academic and research community to conduct research on policy and best practices for employment of persons with a disability;

Completed

b) Establish a research agenda and a plan for addressing the research needs identified.

Completed

Recommendation 35

Establish baseline data, including record-keeping mechanisms, for all recommendations to allow for measurement of progress.

Completed

As part of the work of the Family Priority Delivery Unit, the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons has established baseline data on employment for persons with a disability in New Brunswick. The New Brunswick Health Council will provide key data through its NB Primary Health Survey. The Canadian census will provide additional information.

Recommendation 36

An Employment Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group be established to oversee the on-going implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan. A chairperson must be designated for the implementation group and membership should include senior civil servants of lead Government Departments as well as appointed community partners, including representation from First Nations communities, and a private sector employer. The Group shall meet on a predetermined schedule and will be responsible for the following:

- Establishing time frames for implementing the Action Plan recommendations and identifying first steps;
- Establishing committees/working groups identified in the Action Plan to undertake and implement specific recommendations;
- Overseeing research required by the Action Plan;
- Undertaking reviews of policies as needed to ensure compliance with the Action Plan recommendations;
- Overseeing the collection of data and other information to measure results consistent with the key indicators outlined in the Action Plan; and
- Providing progress updates to the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons.

Completed

Recommendation 37

An annual report on the implementation of the Employment Action Plan, including information on the impact of the plan, be prepared and released publicly during Disability Awareness Week.

Completed

Recommendation 38

An annual meeting between community partners, Ministers and deputy ministers of lead departments, and the Premier be held to discuss progress, issues and challenges.

Completed

Next steps

In looking at employment for persons with a disability and hearing from stakeholders, it is clear that doing things the same way as has always been done will result in the same outcomes, which stakeholders agree need to be improved.

It is also possible and desirable to have an approach driven by New Brunswick data that takes an innovative partnership approach to increase the number of jobs for persons with a disability while also meeting the needs employers to operate in a sustainable and profitable manner.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons continues to work to find ways for this work to be done better, to improve our collective strategic impact and to support a more intense focus on meeting the needs of its clients as people and as active citizens.

The council will continue to work closely with the Office of the Premier, GNB departments and stakeholders on the renewal of the Employment Action Plan (EAP) as the current version approaches its end on March 31, 2018.

It is the Premier's Council's expectation that as part of the Family Plan, GNB departments involved with the EAP will continue to show leadership and commitment to completing the EAP in a coordinated and complementary way within GNB and with stakeholders.

The council will continue to follow up with each GNB department to encourage and support progress with the recommendations of the current EAP. The council will also continue to report annually to the public on the collective progress being made with the implementation of the EAP.

Conclusion

Over many years, New Brunswick has undertaken numerous strategies and plans aimed at improving employment for persons with a disability.

The priority of the provincial government is job creation and the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons is working with GNB and others to support job creation for persons with a disability. This is a necessary step to make New Brunswick the best place to live, work and raise a family.

While progress with employment for persons with a disability has been made through the wide array of available community or government programs, and the investment of substantial amounts of money, more still needs to be done. Far too many people with a disability are still unable to find a real job with real wages in New Brunswick.

Disability issues are complex, touching the lives of nearly each person in New Brunswick as disability consumers, through family members or via friends.

Effective solutions require coordination, collaboration and trust between stakeholders along with ongoing engagement between government decision-makers and those with a disability that are affected by the decisions taken by government and others.

Working together, New Brunswick will be built into place that prospers by ensuring true inclusion for each person that lives here.